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SUBJECT: FOOD INSECURITY ALERT FOR CENTRAL MOZAMBIQUE

REF: MAPUTO 0007

¶1. SUMMARY: The LATE ARRIVAL OF RAIN THIS YEAR IN CENTRAL MOZAMBIQUE, FOLLOWING TWO POOR SEASONS OF RAINFALL, HAS LED TO POOR HARVEST YIELDS THAT ARE AFFECTING THE FOOD SECURITY OF 97,000 IN TETE PROVINCE, 14,500 IN NORTHERN MANICA, AND 58,000 IN SOFALA. A USAID ASSESSMENT TRIP IN DECEMBER 2008 WITH WORLD FOOD PROGRAM (WFP) CONFIRMED THAT RESIDENTS IN THESE RURAL AREAS ARE NOW FACING SOARING FOOD PRICES. THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOZAMBIQUE (GOM) HAS HIGHLIGHTED THIS CRISIS THROUGH REPORTS FROM ITS TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION (SETSAN) AND HAS SUPPORTED THE WFP APPEAL FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO THE PROTRACTED RELIEF AND RECOVERY OPERATION (PRRO) FOR MOZAMBIQUE, BY RAISING ITS EMERGENCY ALERT LEVEL TO CODE ORANGE. MOZAMBIQUE IS ALSO ENTERING THE SEASON WHEN THE ZAMBEZI RIVER FLOODS, WHICH EXPERTS ARE PREDICTING COULD HAPPEN AGAIN THIS YEAR, BUT RESOURCES DO NOT EXIST IN COUNTRY TO RESPOND. MISSION WILL CONTINUE TO CONSULT WITH REGIONAL USAID/FFP AND USAID/OFDA ADVISORS TO DETERMINE NEEDS AND PLAN FOR APPROPRIATE ASSISTANCE. END SUMMARY.

ORANGE ALERT FOR CENTRAL MOZAMBIQUE

¶2. THE LATE RAINS IN CENTRAL MOZAMBIQUE THIS YEAR, IN ADDITION TO THE TWO PREVIOUS SEASONS WITH POOR RAINFALL AND POOR HARVEST YIELDS, DO NOT BODE WELL FOR MANY MOZAMBIKAN FAMILIES. WFP AND SETSAN ISSUED AN URGENT APPEAL FOR INCREASED FOOD CONTRIBUTIONS IN NOVEMBER 2008. THE FOLLOWING MONTH (DECEMBER 2008), THE GOM RAISED THE EMERGENCY ALERT LEVEL FOR CENTRAL MOZAMBIQUE TO CODE ORANGE, ITS NEXT TO HIGHEST LEVEL. AS THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM HAS ALMOST EXHAUSTED ITS RESOURCES, WFP HAS SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED THE USG TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FOOD ASSISTANCE. THE REQUEST IS URGENT, GIVEN THAT MOZAMBIQUE IS NOW APPROACHING THE SEASON WHEN THE ZAMBEZI RIVER FLOODS, WHICH EXPERTS ARE PREDICTING COULD HAPPEN AGAIN THIS YEAR.

SOARING FOOD PRICES; INCREASED VULNERABLE POPULATION

¶3. IN RESPONSE TO THE WFP APPEAL AND FEWSNET REPORTING, A USAID TEAM (COMPOSED OF THE MISSION DISASTER RELIEF OFFICER AND THE ASSISTANT MISSION DISASTER RELIEF OFFICER) TRAVELED TO THE AREA IN DECEMBER 2008. THEIR FINDINGS WERE REPORTED IN REFTTEL, CITING THE USE OF COPING MECHANISMS ALREADY IN PLACE, SUCH AS EATING WILD FOODS, EATING FEWER MEALS AND THE SALE OF ASSETS. THEY MET WITH DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS, TOURED COMMUNITIES WITH DISTRICT AGRICULTURAL ADMINISTRATORS AND VISITED WITH THE DISTRICT HEALTH STAFF.

¶4. IN ADDITION, STEEP INCREASES IN FOOD PRICE HAVE FURTHER EXACERBATED THIS DIRE FOOD SECURITY SITUATION. IN ONE DISTRICT WHERE THE ASSESSMENT TEAM VISITED, IT WAS REPORTED THAT THE PRICE OF CORN FOR 20 KILOS WAS NOW 260 METICAIS (USD 10.40) WHEN LAST YEAR AT THE SAME TIME IT WAS 150 METICAIS

(6.00) ALL DISTRICTS VISITED REPORTED SIGNIFICANT PRICE INCREASES FROM LAST YEAR.

15. SETSAN,S NATIONAL VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2009 HAS IDENTIFIED 14,500 FOOD INSECURE IN MANICA, 58,000 IN SOFALA AND 97,000 IN TETE. WHILE THE PRESENT NUMBERS HAVE DECREASED SLIGHTLY FOR BOTH SOFALA AND MANICA (FROM THE PREVIOUS QUARTER), THEY HAVE ALMOST DOUBLED FOR TETE.

PREPARING FOR ALL EVENTUALITIES

16. THE LATE START OF THE RAINS IS MORE WORRISOME BECAUSE THE RAINFALL HAS BEEN ERRATIC FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS IN CENTRAL MOZAMBIQUE. LAST YEAR (AS WELL AS IN THE 2006/2007 SEASON), THE RAINS BEGAN WELL IN OCTOBER/NOVEMBER AND THEN ALL BUT CEASED IN FEBRUARY/MARCH, JUST AS THE CORN WAS NEARING ITS MATURING STAGE. AS A RESULT, CROP RESULTS WERE POOR OR NON-EXISTENT, ESPECIALLY IN THE SOUTHERN DISTRICTS OF TETE PROVINCE AND THE NORTHERN DISTRICTS OF SOFALA AND MANICA.

17. IF THE RAINS DO CONTINUE TO ENSURE A GOOD HARVEST (WITH THE LATE PLANTING, THE CROPS WOULD NOT BE HARVESTED) PROVIDED THE RAINS CONTINUE - UNTIL MAY/JUNE), FOOD RATIONS ARE CRITICALLY NEEDED FOR RESIDENTS IN THIS AREA FOR THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 2009. AS WFP/MOZAMBIQUE IS REACHING THE END OF CURRENTLY AVAILABLE RESOURCES, IT IS URGENTLY APPEALING FOR COMMODITIES TO MEET THIS NEED.

18. HOWEVER, ALSO OF CONCERN IS THE FORECAST FOR A GOOD RAINY SEASON FOR THE ZAMBEZI RIVER VALLEY. SHOULD SEVERE FLOODING OCCUR AGAIN IN MOZAMBIQUE THIS YEAR (PRIMARILY AS A RESULT OF WATER RELEASES FROM KARIBA DAM IN ZAMBIA AS OPPOSED TO RAINFALL IN MOZAMBIQUE), ADDITIONAL FOOD RATIONS WILL BE NEEDED. UNFORTUNATELY, WFP/MOZAMBIQUE IS FACING A PIPELINE RUPTURE AND WOULD BE UNABLE TO RESPOND.

COMMENT

19. COMMENT: TO RESPOND TO THE PRESENT CONDITIONS IN CENTRAL MOZAMBIQUE, ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ARE URGENTLY NEEDED. HOWEVER, IN ADDITION TO THE PRESENT URGENT REQUIREMENT FOR FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS IN CENTRAL MOZAMBIQUE, THERE IS ALSO A NEED FOR TIMELY FOOD ASSISTANCE GIVEN THE POSSIBILITY OF FLOODING AGAIN IN THE ZAMBEZI RIVER VALLEY THIS YEAR WHEN WFP/MOZAMBIQUE IS ALREADY RUNNING SHORT ON NEEDED COMMODITIES. USAID/MOZAMBIQUE WILL CONTINUE TO CONSULT WITH REGIONAL USAID/FFP AND USAID/OFDA ADVISORS TO DETERMINE AND PLAN FOR ASSISTANCE AS IDENTIFIED THROUGH ON-GOING ASSESSMENTS OF HUMANITARIAN NEEDS. END COMMENT.

Chapman